

2011

MA ART AND DESIGN HISTORY
MA MUSEUM AND GALLERY STUDIES



Dissertation Handbook

AHM410

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MODULE CODE: AHM410 **LEVEL:** 7 **CREDITS:** 60

TITLE: Dissertation

PRE-REQUISITES: Taught modules

CO-REQUISITES: None

MODULE SUMMARY (*INDICATIVE*)

The dissertation is the final and most significant piece of work that students take on taught masters courses. In consultation with an allocated tutor, students develop a self-directed research project. Focussing on skills of critical-creative research, analysis and presentation, the dissertation provides the opportunity for students to synthesize and direct their research and learning, and demonstrate the extent of their critical abilities at Masters Level. It also provides an opportunity to pursue a creative project in conjunction with a critical-reflexive written essay.

AIMS

- To help students make a choice of topic for their dissertation which will repay extended research;
- To help students develop a sophisticated understanding of their chosen topic, its appropriate contexts and significance;
- To develop students' ability to practice high level scholarship in researching primary and secondary material;
- To give students a rigorous grasp of the theoretical and methodological issues explicit or implicit in the secondary material.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: on successful completion of the module, students will be able to:

- carry out high level research in depth using both primary and/or secondary material;
- have a rigorous grasp of the appropriate theoretical and methodological issues raised by the research;
- write about their topic in its appropriate contexts with sophisticated understanding
- present their dissertation in an appropriate academic form

CURRICULUM CONTENT (*INDICATIVE*)

- As determined by chosen subject / project area

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY (INDICATIVE)

For the full written submission, student guidelines will be provided specifying length (between 12,000-15,000 words), a hand-in date, assessment details, etc. In addition a short document 'How to go about choosing your topic, researching, planning and writing up your dissertation' will be provided. They will have a group tutorial with the Field Leader to discuss approaches to the dissertation, topics, etc. Thereafter a supervisor, appointed by the Field Leader, will see each student individually for at least three tutorials.

As the culminating piece of research work in the MA, the dissertation will generally be related to areas or issues already encountered in course modules. For those students pursuing the option of a creative project in conjunction with a shorter written submission the same approach to study support will be provided.

Indicative Teaching Hours

Group Tutorials	2 hours
Individual Tutorials	3 hours
Independent study	595 hours
Total	600 hours

ASSESSMENT STRATEGY (INDICATIVE)

LEARNING OUTCOME	ASSESSMENT STRATEGY
On completion of the module, students will be able to:	
1) carry out high level research in depth using both primary and/or secondary material;	Evidenced in dissertation or creative project/essay
2) have a rigorous grasp of the appropriate theoretical and methodological issues raised by the research	Evidenced in dissertation or creative project/essay
3) write about their topic in its appropriate contexts with sophisticated understanding	Evidenced in dissertation or creative project/essay
4) present their dissertation in an appropriate academic form	Evidenced in dissertation or creative project/essay

MAJOR CATEGORIES OF ASSESSMENT

(i) A dissertation of between 12,000 and 15,000 words: 100%

OR

(ii) Creative Project 100%
to include a portfolio and a critical-reflexive essay of 5,000 words

ACHIEVING A PASS

It IS a requirement that major category of assessment must be passed in order to achieve an overall pass for the module.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (INDICATIVE):

Core Text(s):

- Berry, R (1995) *The Research Project: How to Write It*
Carter, P (2004) *Material Thinking: The Theory and Practice of Creative Research.*
Melbourne University Press, Melbourne
Modern Humanities Research Association (1979) *Texts and Dissertations*
Thomson, A (1996) *Critical Thinking – A Practical Introduction*
Warburton, N (1996) *Thinking from A to Z*, Routledge

Recommended Reading:

Further reading will be individually recommended

Contents

1. Your Dissertation

- 1.1 Getting Started
- 1.2 What is Your Research Question?
- 1.3 What is the Context of Your Research?
- 1.4 What Research Method(s) Will You Use?
- 1.5 Does Your Research Raise Any Ethical Issues?
- 1.6 Supervision
- 1.7 The Shape of Research

2. Requirements

- 2.1 Dissertation
- 2.2 Dissertation (Creative Project)

3. Assessment

- 3.1 Assessment Criteria
- 3.2 The Marking Scale

4. Timetable

5. Sources and Resources

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Additional Assessment Guidance (Writing and Presentation)

Appendix B: Referencing

Appendix C: Previous MA Dissertation Topics

1. Your Dissertation

The subject you choose for your dissertation is yours, but it should bear a relationship to the course and the modules you have studied. It is necessary to locate something specific and focused that will sustain several months of research and maintain your interest.

1.1 Getting Started

At this early stage you are not choosing between the Dissertation and its Creative Project option. The decision as to whether a Creative Project is the most appropriate way to address a research question or issue should be made later in the process with the Course Director.

Getting started can be the most challenging part of research, and at this stage it's likely that you have more than one idea. Remember that the process of research is not straightforward and linear. There can be blind alleys, missed opportunities, unexpected encounters and wasted effort. Your completed research project can look very different to what you intended at the beginning. This is all part of the research process!

Finally, it is also important to remember that a conventional Dissertation can be every bit as creative as the Creative Project option. It's really up to you and how you want to approach your research and the presentation of your research.

1.2 What is Your Research Question?

Your research must define a research question, issue, problem, or series of research questions, issues or problems that will be addressed in the course of the research/assignment. To some extent the length or scale of a given research project will determine the number of questions or issues that can be addressed in sufficient detail.

The most interesting dissertations are quite narrow and focused. A broad topic may become unmanageable, and will often be prone to generalisations. The dissertation topic should be something that will hold your interest for the months you will be working on it. While the research project will have an historical and/or conceptual context, in addition it might be a subject on which little specific published research has been produced, or in which a particularly novel convergence is identified and interrogated, or where a new set of ideas, methods, or theories that have not previously been tested can be explored, or that can allow you to make a contribution to knowledge by building on or bridging existing debates.

The process of deciding on your topic may be done on your own or in discussion with the Art and Design History and Museum & Gallery Studies staff. Your first port of call should be your Course Director.

A good research question is not found it is made. It is something that can be shaped and refined through reading and research.

1.3 What is the Context of Your Research?

You must specify a research context for the questions, issues or problems to be addressed, sometimes called a 'literature review'. What other literature has sought to address your question? In the context of Museum & Gallery Studies, an additional important element to reviewing the literature is examples of museum practice; what institutions themselves are saying and doing, both through their institutional documents but also through their exhibitions, events and programmes offered to the public.

Your review of the literature should never be a simple description of what others have said merely summarising their views. At Master's level you must move beyond description to a critical appraisal of what others have said, demonstrating insight and awareness of different approaches and arguments. A literature review is a synthesis of other people's work, and an analysis of that work. Remember that your analysis should always be connected to your research question, issue or problem.

1.4 What Research Method(s) Will You Use?

AT THE CROSSROADS: Is Your Research Practice-Based?

How will you go about doing the research? What historical/theoretical and/or methodological frameworks and methods will you use? What is the role of primary and secondary sources? The analysis of objects, collections, exhibitions, buildings and institutions can all feature in your research, as can social research such as talking to museum staff or visitors. In each case you will need to decide on the most appropriate methods to answer your question and to respond to the research context.

At this point in the development of your research you also need to ask yourself whether your research question and context is most appropriately tackled through practice-based research in the form of a Creative Project.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council of the UK differentiates 'research' from 'practice' in the following terms:

"Creative output can be produced, or practice undertaken, as an integral part of a research process.....we would expect that this practice to be accompanied by some form of documentation of the research process as well as some form of textual analysis or explanation to support its position and to demonstrate critical reflection."

It is therefore important that the practice-based research option or Creative Project that you undertake is critically and reflexively grounded by supporting written text. The Creative Project should be seen as a way of exploring and answering your research question or issue, not as something standalone. The Creative Project is part of the research process, not separate from it.

At this stage, you can make a fully informed decision as to whether your dissertation will follow the Creative Project pathway, in consultation with the Course Director.

Other important questions to consider include:

- Is the Creative Project something that can be submitted on September 1st? If not, how will you be best able to communicate the Project to the supervisors?
- How will you use the Portfolio to support your Creative Project? The Portfolio should be able to link the Project itself with the critical-reflexive essay and the way in which the Creative Project is helping to answer your research question.

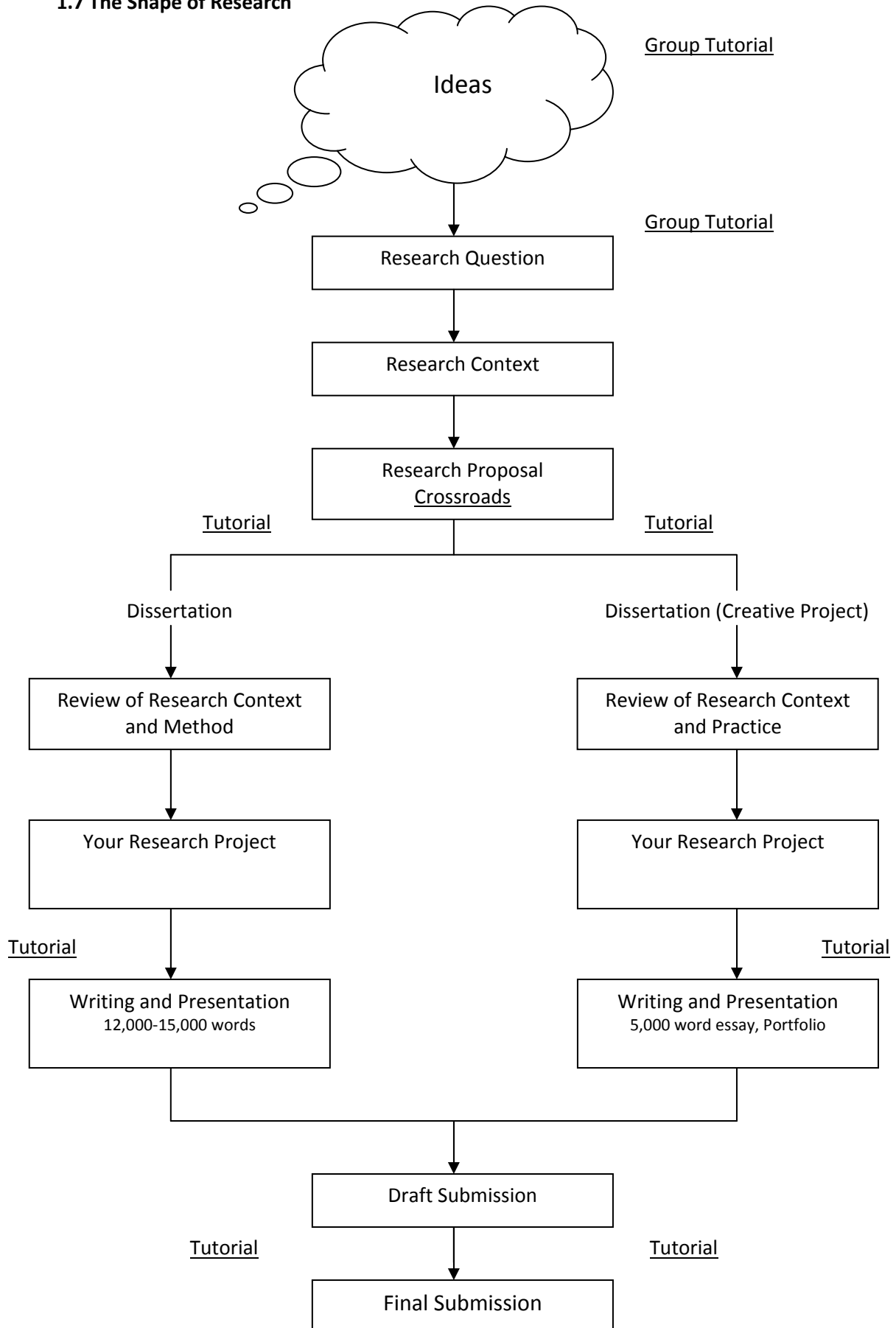
1.5 Does Your Research Raise Any Ethical Issues?

If you are planning to conduct social research involving human subjects (e.g. interviews, observations, surveys, public photography etc.), you will need to think about any potential issues relating to research ethics. Research involving human subjects must be conducted responsibly. These forms of research, which can be very valuable tools, should be discussed with the Course Director for further advice and guidance.

1.6 Supervision

You will be allocated a supervisor who will advise you on the research and writing process, and who will be available to give you at least 3 one-hour supervisions. Make sure you keep in touch with them while you do the research and when writing the dissertation. Bear in mind you will be writing this up during the summer vacation when your supervisor may not be as readily available as during term time. Make sure you give yourself enough time to make any necessary changes suggested by your supervisor before the hand in date.

1.7 The Shape of Research



2. Requirements

2.1 Dissertation

You are required to demonstrate the following in the Dissertation:

- a high level of professional scholarship in researching primary and/or secondary material in depth
- a sophisticated understanding of the subject both in relation to its immediate context and to associated cultural and social issues
- a rigorous grasp of the theoretical and methodological issues raised by the material under consideration and a sense of how they underpin, determine, or can be applied to the subject
- a broad knowledge of and critical approach to the relevant literature
- the ability to maintain a cogent and rigorous argument throughout the main body of writing
- an ability to write in English adequate to the communication of the new knowledge produced

To achieve a Distinction the dissertation will in addition be expected to show at least **one** of the following:

- it makes a contribution to the existing body of research on the chosen topic. This contribution may be the original handling of the primary and/or extensive secondary material
- it demonstrates a full understanding of one or more current methodologies and makes a contribution to this understanding or to professional concerns

2.2 Dissertation (Creative Project)

The Creative Project provides those students who wish to take it an opportunity to develop a creative piece of work (e.g. film, exhibition, installation) within an historical and/or critical-reflexive context. By this, we mean that the 'outcome' of the dissertation (film, exhibition etc) will be examined in the context of the arguments developed within the critical-reflexive essay that supports it.

We are therefore not primarily judging you on the technical standard or quality of the finished 'outcome'. We are examining your ability to pursue creative practice-based research within a critical and reflexive context. This is reflected in the fact that a single mark is given for the overall submission (essay + project). Finally, the Creative Project should be supported by a portfolio of ideas and materials. The portfolio should be A4 or A3 in size.

For students taking the Creative Project option, you are required to demonstrate the following (in addition to the requirements as stated above):

- a rigorous and detailed understanding of how academic research contributes to, informs, and can be a constitutive element of, creative practice
- an ability to locate your creative project with a critical and reflexive context as communicated within the written element of the submission
- an ability to effectively communicate the process and development of a creative project

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment Criteria

We use specific Assessment Criteria for all MA assignments. These can be found on the Assessment Feedback Form for MA (Level 7) students (see MA Handbook, page 36). When handing your work in you are required to complete a Submission Form which asks you to assess your own performance against these Assessment Criteria. Please take this seriously as we can use this initial assessment to ensure that our feedback is as constructive and productive as possible.

The following provides a more developed discussion of the six criteria. The best work will deliver on each of them to a high level of criticality and competence.

- 1. Breadth and Depth of Research and Critical Engagement with Source Material.** We expect you to read around your research question. The module guides provide detailed reading lists, and of course we hope that your research takes you further. Basing an extended written piece of work on only a handful of main sources will not be enough. In terms of Museum & Gallery Studies this can also include researching specific exhibitions/institutions that are relevant to your research question. We will be looking for the same depth and critical engagement with source material in the Creative Project option.
- 2. Application of Historical and Theoretical Understanding.** Depending on your research question and therefore where your essay is positioned in relation to the fields of Art and Design History or Museum and Gallery Studies and to the literature, it will be important that you are able to apply an historical and/or theoretical understanding of the research subject, which should also inform and locate your approach to a practice-based research project.
- 3. Criticality and Evaluation of Visual and Textual Material.** We are not looking for a description, but a critical examination of a question in relation to the literature and to the field. An argument is supported by references to the literature and quotations from it where relevant and supportive of your argument, not your own personal opinion. This also includes your critical engagement with, evaluation of visual material and the use of images within written pieces of work. Don't use an image unless it helps your argument. Always ask yourself, why is a particular image useful in the context of my work? In the context of the Creative Project option, this is even more important. How has your approach to practice-based research developed critically? Is your practice-based research actually addressing issues of visual and textual material?
- 4. Level of Ambition, Autonomy, Originality.** We encourage and reward ambition and invention in your work. Although the burden of originality at MA level is not the same as one expect from doctoral research, you should always try to find your own research questions and a distinctive approach to the field and its research. This is particularly true of a Creative Project, but be careful not to overreach yourself with what can be achieved in the timetable for the delivery of the Dissertation.

- 5. Methodological Coherence and Persuasiveness of Argument.** It is important that your methodological approach is coherent, and appropriate to addressing your research question and responding to the research context. In some essay-based assignments this will be no more than a literature review. In a more developed piece of research such as the dissertation there will be a need to develop a more detailed approach to methodology. Allied to methodological coherence is the persuasiveness of the argument that you develop. It is important to help the reader follow the argument that you are making, and which is related both to your employment of appropriate methods and the structure of your work.

This is particularly important for the Creative Project option. The rationale for pursuing creative, practice-based research must be made. It must be clear that the Creative Project is central to the research and its presentation.

- 6. Effective Employment of Academic Skills and Rigorous Attention to Presentation.** Demonstrating the effective employment of academic skills includes accuracy and consistency in referencing, then use of a bibliography, and setting out your work clearly in terms of contents and structure. This may call for the use of headings and subheadings to help guide the reader through your work. Your written work should be 1.5 or double line spaced and every page should be numbered. Do not mix fonts or capitalise words unless there is a specific and clear reason for doing so. Remember to state the number of words an essay contains at the end of your work. We normally accept written work that is within +/- 10% of the stated word length. The Dissertation is 12,000-15,000 words, the Dissertation (Creative Project) includes an essay of 5,000 words.

If pursuing the Creative Project option we expect the same level of academic skills in the written component. But, we also expect your referencing of other material in your Portfolio to be equally rigorous.

3.2 The Marking Scale

All dissertations are double-marked internally and also audited by the External Examiner.

Each Assessment Criteria is 'graded' from A to E on the Assessment Feedback Form. This is used for guidance in assessing your work and helping you to see in which areas you are strongest, and which areas need further work. Your overall mark is awarded on the balance of all the Criteria on the following percentage scale:

- Distinction 70% and over
- Commendation 60-69%
- Pass 50-59%
- Fail 49% and below

For example, if you are marked below a 'C' against any one of the Assessment Criteria that means you are not producing work at the level required of an MA in that area. However, remember that your overall mark is determined on the balance of all the Criteria.

We use the grading of each Assessment Criteria to inform our written comments on your work and in particular to help clearly identify for you areas for development in an effort to ensure that our comments and feedback help you to develop and improve your academic work.

70% and above	Distinction
60% to 69%	Commendation
50% to 59%	Pass
49% and below	Fail

4. Timetable

The following dates are set to ensure that all dissertation work is completed to a satisfactory state on time. It will also help you plan your time by giving you deadlines to work to.

January 2011:	Group Tutorial, Introduction to the Dissertation T67
w/b 28th March:	Group Tutorial, venue TBC. For students to outline their initial ideas and research topics and get feedback
w/b 9th May:	Emailed submission of one page research proposal to the Course Director. This should include a research question or issue that you seek to address, a proposed approach to carrying out the research, a summary of any research done to date, and, if you are choosing the Creative Project option, a rationale for doing so in the context of a research project.
Mid May:	Allocation of Supervisors
w/b 23rd May:	First Tutorial with Supervisor. At this meeting you should agree a timetable for additional tutorials over the summer, so the following timings are indicative. You should have at least one tutorial before submission of the Draft.
Mid-late July:	Draft handed in to the Postgraduate office. This should be as full a draft as possible to help your supervisor's feedback
Early August:	Tutorial for feedback on draft

<u>1st September:</u>	Hand in 2 bound copies of the final Dissertation and Creative Project material to the student office on the ground floor of the Knights Park campus.
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Mid October:	External Examiner Assessment Boards
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5. Sources and Resources

Research can be carried out in a number of ways and in different places. Libraries are the first place to start. Although Kingston University Library has a large collection of materials you will need to visit other libraries in the London area as well. Of course, as well as using the documentary resources of various institutions, visiting museums, galleries and other spaces can be an important part of your research, and the identification of your subject matter. Art & Design History and Museum & Gallery Studies resources:

- British Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Cromwell Road
- British Library, Euston Road
- Tate Library, Tate Britain, Millbank

Access to these libraries will require a letter from the University and you will need to take along to the libraries 2 coloured passport sized photographs.

Other university libraries you can visit by appointment on day passes:

- The School of Oriental and African Studies
- Warburg Institute
- Senate House
- Courtauld Institute

Other more specialist libraries and archives exist such as the Women's Art Library, Marx Memorial Library, etc.

In addition to these resources are university and museum studies-based resources in addition to those cited above that may prove useful for dissertations in museum and gallery studies.

- **University College London:** has a very good stock of books and journals on the subject at the library situated in the Institute of Archaeology
- **Kingston Museum & Heritage Service:** including local studies room and local libraries

Your research may be based on materials on show, either on permanent or temporary display. London is rich in museums and galleries, and many of them have libraries and archives you can visit. Below are just a few:

- British Film Institute (BFI)
- Courtauld Institute of Art
- Institute of Contemporary Arts
- Museum of London
- National Gallery
- National Maritime Museum
- National Portrait Gallery
- Natural History Museum
- Royal Academy
- Tate Gallery Britain, Millbank
- Tate Gallery Modern, Bankside
- Victoria and Albert Museum
- Wallace Collection
- Design Museum
- Museum of London
- Crafts Council Gallery
- Science Museum

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Additional Assessment Guidance (Writing and Presentation)

For both Dissertation and Dissertation (Creative Project) your written submission should plan include the following sections. Although Abstract, Introduction and Methodology would come first, and Conclusion at the end of your work, how you choose to present your research is up to you. But your decisions will need argument and justification.

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Methodology
- Literature Review
- Critical Presentation of Your Research
- Summary and Conclusion
- Bibliography
- Filmography (if appropriate)
- List of Illustrations (if appropriate)

Introduction: this acts as a map providing the reader with an idea of **what** the dissertation is about, the purpose and direction of the dissertation (the **how**), sources used, etc. You should also include the reasons for your choice of subject (the **why**), the methods you will adopt and, if appropriate, what you are not including. For the Creative Project, the Introduction is particularly important for explaining the rationale for practice-based research.

Methodology. This should set out the main approaches to have taken to research and/or practice, arguing for their effectiveness in delivering on your research question.

Literature review: this reviews the field of writing and other materials on your subject. It should include arguments for and against the terms met in the literature, and definitions of the way you will be using them, along with justifications for this. Thus the literature review will identify and indicate how you will use and develop ideas found in the literature relevant to the issues you have raised in the introduction. Although a smaller piece of written work accompanies the Creative Project, you will still need to demonstrate your understanding of the relevant literature through literature review.

Critical presentation of your research: this is the centre of your dissertation. The research presentation should be coherent, comprehensive and justified. It should have a thread running through it (the **thesis**) linking the ideas together, relating to the introduction and summarised in the conclusion. For those taking the creative project option, this section can be used to critically reflect on the process of creative practice that you have engaged in.

For the most part in the Creative Project option, the presentation of your research is your example of creative practice. However, the task of presenting this critically needs to be achieved by effectively linking the supporting essay and Portfolio so that the criticality can be traced between the literature and other sources of the research context, and your piece of practice itself.

The critical presentation of your research should:

- take into account a wide range of data applied to a limited body of pre-identified, central issues
- indicate alternative viewpoints that you have taken into account when considering issues related to the central propositions
- demonstrate your central points through developed arguments
- ensure that you have not used the work of others without acknowledgement

Quotations must always be marked and footnoted. If over 40 words, quotations should be indented. Plagiarism will lead to automatic and immediate disqualification of the piece of work.

Summary and Conclusion: this section discusses your findings. It should link your findings and the ideas discussed in the literature review, including the methods used. It should be a clear explanation of the implications of your findings on possible future research. If taking the Creative Project option, there must be critical reflection on the efficacy and effectiveness of the practice-based research in addressing your research question and research context.

Appendix B: Referencing

Detailed guidance on how to reference your source material is provided online:

<http://student.kingston.ac.uk/C13/C12/Referencing/default.aspx>

You should use one of two referencing systems: Harvard or Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA). MA Museum & Gallery Studies in particular does not have a preferred referencing system as the literature you encounter will use both of these methods and more. The most important thing to remember is to stick to one of these two systems and apply it rigorously, accurately and consistently. All referenced literature should appear in a bibliography found at the end of your work.

Illustrations:

- These should be referenced with the title, dimensions, media and source where appropriate
- Illustrations may appear in the text or at the end, but reference to them should be made in the text (Fig.1, Fig.2, etc.).
- The list of illustrations should contain details on where the image came from, (e.g. Francis Bacon, reproduced in Tate catalogue, p.4).

Filmography:

- The Filmography should list all films referenced in the dissertation in alphabetical order by title or by director, also specifying the date of production (or release) and the country of origin. Where appropriate, it might also include the running time and the type and format of the film.

Bibliography

The aim of the bibliography is to ensure that somebody reading your work can easily find these sources for themselves. This applies whether you are using a book, report, journal article or internet site.

Layout: Books

Author(s) or editor(s)

Year of publication

Title: subtitle (in *italics* or underlined)

Edition (if not the 1st)

Place of publication

Publisher

Layout: Journal Articles

Author(s) of article

Date of journal

Title of article (in inverted commas)

Title of journal (in *italics* or underlined)

Volume & number

Page number(s)

Layout: Internet sources

Author(s)

Date of creation (if known)

Title of article or page (and title of website if relevant)

Full address of site (URL)

Date of access

Interviews

Name of interviewee (as author above; followed by details of the interview, location, date, etc. brief details about the interviewee may be helpful if she/he is not well known

For example:

Perkins, Sean. Interview with the author, London, 22 April 1996 (Mr Perkins is formerly of Imagination and now owns his own design studio in London)

Videos

Videos should be cited as programmed title (Channel Date)

For example:

(Frayling 1990) Tomorrow's World (BBC2 3 September 1990)

Bibliographies can be organized in a variety of ways:

- alphabetical by author
- categorized by type of material e.g. books, journals, theses
- categorized into primary and secondary sources

Within these categories the entries should be alphabetical by author. An example of a short bibliography using the Harvard System is shown below:

Dissertation guides on the Internet

Kingston University Library web pages

http://www.king.ac.uk/library_media/cite.html

or

<http://www.kingston.ac.uk/~kx08125/ref.htm>

London College of Fashion guide to bibliographies and citations

<http://www.linst.ac.uk/library/libinf/publications/lcf/general-guides/bibscitations-00.pdf>

Appendix C: Previous MA Dissertation Topics (CP=Creative Project)

Museos Rodantes: Colombian Trucks

Our Favourite Things: autoethnography, stored objects and memory (CP)

From the Louvre to Dion: Curating an Exhibition (CP)

Families as the main audience in science museums

A quiet catastrophe of mind and matter: the writings of Robert Smithson and the contemporary site-specific work

What type of place is the contemporary museum and what are its boundaries?

The past is elsewhere: looking for the future among the ruins of modernity

Checkpoint Valkyrie and the Hyperreal (CP)

The Guggenheim and Louvre in Abu Dhabi

Audience research based on personality

Co-creation as a new means of reinventing the museum

Decay and garden art: From Derek Jarman to Anja Gallacio

A cultural history of electric fires

Alternative Spaces, Alternative Exhibitions: Art outside the gallery

The Built Space as Curatorial Process

Bill Viola's videos: Digital Technology and Spirituality

Japanese Video Cultures

Performative curatorial strategies and art after representation

Francis Bacon, sexuality, and death

Iceland, national identity, and design

The role of the muse: an examination of the artist/muse relationship

The role of commercial value in contemporary design and the effect this has on methods of display

Designing gender: a historiographic investigation of women's design history

An investigation into approaches to and cultural position of the representation of fashion

The Venice Biennale: Politics, Nation, and Identity

Feministo: A Study of the Women's Art Collective

Wilhelm Wagenfeld: Pioneer of Modern German Design

Representing Chinese Communities in British museums and galleries

The Geffrye Museum: A Discussion of the New Middle Classes, Consumption and Taste

Photographic Images of Women in the Great War

The Coming of Age of Irish Art

Propaganda in Three-Dimensions: the "Britain Can Make It" Exhibition of 1946

Diversity & Inclusion at the Design Museum & V&A

Importance of national identity & use of exhibitions to promote national image abroad:
A case study of British Council exhibitions